



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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June 3, 2014
FB14-040

NOAA Fisheries Announces Proposed Rule to Expand Boundaries of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern and to Modify Transit Provisions *(Comment Period Ends July 3, 2014)*

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a proposed rule to implement Amendment 8 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hardbottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region (Coral Amendment 8). The proposed rule for Coral Amendment 8 published in the *Federal Register* (79 FR 31907) on June 3, 2014 and the comment period ends on July 3, 2014.

If implemented the rule would extend protections for deepwater coral ecosystems by expanding the boundaries of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, and the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

Within Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, the use of bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot or trap is prohibited. If aboard a fishing vessel; anchor, use of anchor and chain, and grapple and chain is prohibited. Mid-water trawls are also prohibited in Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

The rule also proposes a transit provision through Oculina Bank Habitat Area for Particular Concern for fishing vessels with rock shrimp onboard. If implemented, vessels transiting the area with rock shrimp onboard would be required to have gear appropriately stowed and maintain a minimum speed of 5 knots. Vessel speed would be determined by a vessel monitoring system registering a ping (signal) at a rate of 1 ping per 5 minutes.

Request for Comments

Comments on the proposed rule must be received no later than **July 3, 2014**, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries. See the Addresses section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Coral Amendment 8 may be obtained from:

- The NOAA Fisheries Web site
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.

You may submit comments by the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2014-0065> click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- **Mail:** NOAA Fisheries
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
c/o Karla Gore
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NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only. Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin may not be considered.

More Information

For more information on Coral Amendment 8, please click on this link to the Frequently Asked Questions found at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.